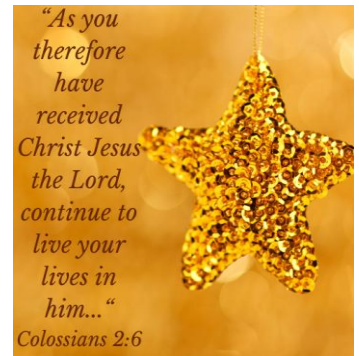




*As you therefore have received
Christ Jesus the Lord,
continue to live your lives in him,
rooted and built up in him and
established in the faith, just as you were
taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

Colossians 2:6-7



Dear Church Family,

Happy New Year! I pray that you and your loved ones had a blessed Christmas and have been able to find some time for R&R in the space between holidays. In my family, we definitely enjoyed our Christmas celebrations. On the 23rd, we baked cookies with my mom. On the 24th, we celebrated Christmas Eve with you at church (Candlelight Service has always been my favorite worship of the year.) On the 25th, Zach (the person I've been dating for just shy of 1.5 years) came down to open presents with us at home, and then we all traveled to Ava, IL to celebrate with my parents and my sister's family. Cora then went to celebrate Christmas with her dad and spent the week with his family in Granite City. Our last Christmas celebration of the year will be on the 31st, when Zach, Cora, and I travel to Texas to see Zach's parents and little sister. When we return, it will be time to celebrate Epiphany once again.

Each year for Epiphany, I look forward to giving out (and receiving) star words, and this year is no different. Epiphany is the Christian holiday that celebrates the Magi's visit to the Christ child, and each year, we choose "Star Words" on Epiphany so that the word might help guide us closer to Christ throughout the year. When we receive our Star Word for the year ahead, it can sometimes be confusing how this word might possibly do us any good. It's hard to imagine the possibilities that lie ahead. And so, as we sit at the end of one year and the beginning of another, it's nice to look back and reflect on whether the word was able to help you. And, if it was, how did it help you feel closer to Christ?

In 2023, my word was "grow", and to be honest, I didn't pay much attention to it for the first few months of the year. I felt overwhelmed in multiple areas of my life, and I felt good just making it through the week still intact...I didn't have room for growth, and so I laid it on my desk and left it there, unseen, under a pile of papers. However, once I took time to rest and refocus during Sabbatical, I found that my Star Word – Grow – was perfect for this year. I was able to lean into my relationship with God in a different way, stretch myself to learn helpful and accessible spiritual practices, grow my connection with the world (and the people) around me, and learn some new tools to help keep above water when life feels overwhelming.

And so, in 2024, I am going to be sharing with you some of the ways I experienced "growth" because they might just be helpful to you too. I've split them up into 6 different areas, and in February, I'll be sharing the first one – Organization – which has been something I have struggled with throughout my life.

I think the biggest thing I've learned about "growth" this year, however, has been that growth is difficult when we try to force it or put too much pressure on ourselves amid life's stresses. Growth happens over time...not on a schedule we can enforce. Just as a gardener gives plants space, time, and nourishment to grow, we also must allow ourselves the space and time to grow...and afford ourselves the physical, emotional, and spiritual nourishment we need that helps make growth possible. Self-care isn't selfish. It is a necessary part of our lives if we wish to allow growth a chance. Without water, sun, and soil, a plant has little hopes of growing into the plant God created it to be.

As we enter 2024, I invite you to ponder what nourishment you need? What allows you the space and time and care you need to grow? And I invite you to be compassionate with yourself throughout the process, just as God is compassionate with all of us. And, I pray that each of you has a very blessed and fulfilling new year!

✧ *With Love and Hope, Pastor Christy Smith* ✧

St. John Prayer List

Chris Bates	Jed Bates	Lois & Stan Clark	Greg Erdmann
Cathy Haller	Denise Hamilton	Pauline Kraemer	Marian Nelson
Orville Rinderer	Rogers Family	Connie Zimmers	



Ken Erdmann	(Greg Erdmann's brother)
Ken Fritz	(Cathy Haller's brother)
Rich Fritz	(Cathy Haller's father)
Richard Haller	(Cathy Haller's brother-in-law)
Roik Hockenberger	(Heather Netemeyer's father)
Logan Miller	(Ron & Kimberly Tremmel's son)
Crystal Minton	(Kim Tremmel's deceased friend's adopted daughter)
Tammy Press	(Marian Funk's niece)
Connie Shildt	(Marian Funk's sister)
Gary & Carol Weshinsky	(Laura Wesselmann's father & mother)
Craig Wheeler	(Kim Tremmel's friend)
Bill Workman	(Russ & Jeanne Heuberger's cousin)



Pastor Christy is usually in the office Tuesday - Friday from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM but will make appointments if needed. Contact her by calling her cell phone at 618-973-3040. To contact Bev Adams, the church office administrator, please email her at stjohntrenton@gmail.com or call 224-9828 Monday through Friday.



Birthday Blessings

JANUARY Birthdays

Maddie Henderson January 2	Marian Funk January 18
Michelle Bopp January 5	Jim Arentsen January 20
Cameron Wuebbles January 7	Bryan Wernle January 20
Leon Jones January 10	Barbara Nelson January 22
Lois Roach January 10	Kaeden Tobin January 22
Gay Kuhn January 13	Laurie Henderson January 28
Trudy Kline January 16	Aaron Becker January 28
Teresa Von Bokel January 17	Hudson Szpila January 29
Tim Bair January 30	

JANUARY Anniversaries

John & Sharon Logan January 13



**JANUARY COUNCIL
MEMBER ON DUTY
Ron Tremmel**



Virtual Worship Services

Virtual services continue for those wishing to attend. We want to make worship as convenient as possible for our members and the community. Please see our website or our Facebook page for the Zoom link.

- To call in with phone audio only, call
- **1-312-626-6799** and then the meeting ID:
- **8436488110** followed by the pound sign.
- Password, if needed, will be: **62293**

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- To all who gave to the *Snack Pack Program*
- To those who gave to the *Christmas Fund and OCWM*
- To all who supplied coffee *hour goodies during December*
- To the *Bell Ringers* who stood at the *Trenton IGA for the Trenton Council of Churches and the Salvation Army*

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OFFICE CLOSURES



The office will be closed on Monday, January 1 and January 15 for the New Year's Day and Martin Luther King, Jr. day.

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GREETING CARDS



Don't forget to sign the greeting cards in the vestibule when you come to worship service on Sundays. The

Sonshine Ministry appreciates your help in keeping connected with members.

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POP UP SUNDAY SCHOOL



When: January 21, 2024, during Pastor Christy's sermon

What: The Creation Story

- Activities:** Old Testament Scavenger Hunt
Word Scramble for Important Words
A Surprise Craft

Trivia Corner



This month's trivia is about Epiphany.

1. When is Epiphany observed?
2. What does Epiphany commemorate?
3. What is the name of the period between December 25th and January 6th?
4. What is the evening preceding Epiphany called in the West?
5. When children receive small gifts on Epiphany, where do they find the presents?

Answers are on page 5

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De-Hanging of the Greens

We will be taking down the Christmas decorations on Sunday, January 7th after church service. Boxes and tubs will be placed throughout the church to help with the task. We hope everyone will be able to stay to help out.



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BACK TOGETHER AGAIN



Part of St. John's Confirmation Class of 2005 were back together at the wedding of a friend! Former confirmands are:

Raymond Feldmann, Rachel Kuhn, Maggie Arentsen, and Kevin Kunz. Also pictured are Lonna Patton and Stephen Feldmann. It was good to see them together again.

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FELLOWSHIP BREAKFAST

The Fellowship Breakfast is the first Tuesday of the month at 8:00 AM at Good Ol' Days in New

Baden. So mark your 2024 calendars for Feb. 6, March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4, July 2, Aug. 6, Sept. 3, Oct. 1, Nov. 5 & Dec. 3. Come join us for an enjoyable breakfast with others. It's a time for great conversation, food and fellowship. Everyone is welcome!





Advent Fund Drive for the Snack Pack Program

This Advent Season, we asked for donations to the Clinton County Snack Pack Program. Our goal for this Advent Fund Drive was to have at least 100 ornaments on the tree by Christmas Day.

We are happy to report that we have WELL EXCEEDED this goal with 162 ornaments representing \$2,754!!

Thanks to all for the very generous donations you have given, we covered the tree and then some. We could not have done it without your dedication to this program.

Women's J.O.Y. Fellowship

There were plenty of pajamas donated to Kindercottage this month. Enough for all the children, any siblings they might have, and some to keep in the drawers at Kindercottage to use as needed. The congregation gathered and donated 123 (!!!) pairs of pajamas. In addition to all those pj's, we also sent 10 pairs of baby socks, 4 pairs of slipper socks, 6 fleece throws, 6 double sided, hand-tied throws, 2 t-shirts, 3 pairs of athletic shorts, and 5 pairs of long pants. When the SUV arrived with the donation, the kids were singing Jingle Bells, so we got in on the fun. We were even able to supply real sleigh bells which the kids loved to shake. The building is being renovated with new windows and new flooring so singing and hauling in pajamas was no distraction at all. We give many thanks to everyone who so generously contributed this month and all year long.

Our January donation request will be for office supplies and sippy cups. In order to communicate with parents and other partners Kindercottage needs supplies like copy paper, pens, adult scissors, Post-It notes and envelopes. In addition, if you could add a sippy cup or two, that would help out greatly. Donations of office supplies enable Kindercottage to put their dollars towards other needed things. This congregation has shown their dedication to children, so we appreciate your donations at the start of 2024. Our travel day to Kindercottage will be January 23rd.



DONATION STATEMENTS

Donation statements will be going out on Friday, January 12th as the church books closed on Wednesday, January 3, 2024. Just a reminder for 2024 that you can also donate on our website www.stjohntrenton.org. Click on "Support Our Church." Forms are in the office if you wish to set up giving through your checking account. We appreciate all you give to keep the mission of St. John UCC going. Thank you!

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, January 28th** after the church service. The budget will also be discussed for approval at this time. Annual reports are due by Wednesday, January 10th, 2024! If you are the person responsible for submitting your committee's report, please have it in to the office by 1/10/24. The following committees and organizations will be submitting reports: Women's J.O.Y. Fellowship, Memorial Committee, Christian Education, Hospitality Ministry, Rainbow Preschool, Building & Grounds, Sonshine Ministry, St. John Quilters & Worship Ministry. The report will be ready by Wednesday, January 17th and will be sent out by email



and will also be available in the church narthex. If you want to be on our email list, send your request to stjohntronton@gmail.com. If you want a paper copy sent to you, call the office at 618-224-9828.

RUMMAGE SALE



Did you make a New Year’s resolution to “get rid of stuff”? Well, the next rummage sale at St. John won’t be until mid-April but we want to take advantage of any cleaning, purging, or updating that you will be doing in early 2024. Now is the time to tackle that closet, cabinet, basement, or cluttered room that has been on your mind for so long. In order to accommodate those

who wish to bring donations for the rummage sale, the vestibule will be open two days a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) starting January 9th. *So bring your clean and serviceable books, household items, clothes, bedding, knick-knacks, decorations, toys* and drop them off in the vestibule on any Tuesday or Thursday for the next rummage sale (no large items at this time and please no weapons or ammunition). We appreciate your donations and look forward to another successful fundraiser.



Council Meeting Highlights – November 21, 2023

- Planning a support project for advent for Snack Pack Program.
- Would like to design a church logo. The logo would represent who we are as a congregation. Will need input from congregation important. Would like any artistic contributions.
- Tentative date for Annual Meeting January 28, 2024. Would also include budget meeting.
- Beginning to work on budget. Input from members welcome.
- Next council meeting date is Tuesday, January 19 at 6:00 PM.



Trivia Corner Answers

1. The UCC observes Epiphany on January 6th along with Roman Catholics and Lutherans.
2. Epiphany commemorates the Magi’s visit to Jesus; the baptism of Jesus; and the first miracle of Jesus.
3. The Twelve Days of Christmas
4. Twelfth Night
5. Presents on Epiphany are traditionally put in children’s shoes.

BOOK CLUB

Don’t forget that the Book Club will be meeting on Wednesday, January 10, to discuss two fictional novels, “*The House in the Cerulean Sea*” by TJ Klune and “*Remarkably Bright Creatures*” by Shelby Van Pelt. Both books are available for check out in the church library.



Rainbow Preschool News

I hope all of our students are enjoying their holiday break with their families and I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas!

Both classes had a busy month filled with fun painting projects, writing their letters, number projects, and cutting projects. Our MWF students had a movie day and watched The Star. Thank you to Pehg Zeller for coming to help Ms. Lisa while I was out of town.

Happy December birthdays to the following students: Naomi R. on December 11th and Reese L. on December 27th.

Pastor Christy came in and read the stories Extra Yarn and Twas the Evening of Christmas. Both classes love story time with Pastor Christy and always look forward to the books she brings in to read. We are looking forward to seeing what books she brings into read in the new year.

We are excited for the break but will miss the kids over the next two weeks. School will resume on Thursday January 4th for our TU/TH students and Friday January 5th for our MWF students. When students return will we start the alphabet box and continue sending homework home. More information about the alphabet box will be sent home when students return to school.

Thank you all for the wonderful gifts you gave to me and Ms. Lisa we are very grateful for you all. You have wonderful children, and we enjoy having them in our classes!

Reminder

A few reminders for January:

- School will resume on Thursday January 4th and Friday January 5th.*
- January tuition is due Monday January 8th and Tuesday January 9th.*
- No school- Monday January 15th- Martin Luther King's birthday*
- Please remember to send a coat, gloves/mittens, and a hat with your child. We will continue to go outside weather permitting.*
- If Wesclin cancels school due to snow, we will be closed as well.*
 - When watching the news for school cancellation, please look for Wesclin School District*
 - An email/text message will be sent out notifying you that school is cancelled, and it will be posted on the preschool Facebook page.*
- The alphabet box will start on Monday January 22nd and Tuesday January 23rd.*
- Registration paperwork for the 2024-2025 school year will be sent home in late January/early February. Please fill out and return as soon as possible.*

We hope you all have a safe and healthy Christmas with your families, and we will see everyone in the New Year!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! From Ms. Misty



A Paper Bag Christmas



Mary is visited by an angel



Joseph has to decide



The Innkeeper has no room



The baby Jesus is born



Even the animals rejoice



An angel visits the shepherds



The shepherds declare to go see baby Jesus and pay him homage



The stars show the way



An angel speaks to the Magi



The Magi present gifts



First Row

Laura Wesselmann – Bull
Owen Henderson – Cow
Garrett Wesselmann – Wise Man
Rob Heiser – Shepherd
Hank Henderson – Sheep

Third Row

Gary Kniepkamp – Inn Keeper
Curt Wesselmann –Chicken
Joyce Kniepkamp – Angel
Sandy Booth – Angel
Max Wesselmann – Donkey

Second Row

Kim Tremmel – Shepherd
Jo-Allison Rogers – Shepherd
Susan Heiser – Star
Pehg Zeller – Star
Stephen Fedmann – Wise Man
Mark Peters – Joseph
Maddie Henderson – Baby Jesus
Cora Eckert – Mary
Margie Bopp – Donkey
Lonna Patton – Wise Man
Teresa Von Bokel – Inn Keeper

Rev. Christy Smith – Narrator (not pictured)

(Pictures are from our Christmas pageant of audience members who were given paper bags with the props and costumes inside)